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Project I.D. No. 124

NAME: 高橋 Takahashi Kotaro DATE OF BIRTH: 1899 PLACE OF BIRTH: Miyagi-ken
Age: 76 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: _____

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1919 Age: 20 M.S. Y.Y. Port of entry: _____
Occupation/s: 1. Farm laborer 2. Ranch manager 3. _____
Place of residence: 1. Fresno 2. Delano 3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Interned in Santa Fe (3 months)
Name of relocation center: Joined family in Poston
Dispensation of property: _____ Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. Cook 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: California

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: July 1945
Address/es: 1. Reedley 2. Sanger
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 5/7/75 Place: Sanger, Ca.
Translator: Mabel Hall

Takahashi, Kotaro
Sanger, Ca.
May 7, '75

Takahashi: We worked at one place for a month or so, and when the work was done, we rolled up our blankets and went to town with $100 of $200 we earned. While we were staying at the boarding house for a month or so we did not have any work, so we used to go out and gamble. When the money was gone, the thinning time came, so we went out and worked for one or two months. We migrated like this from one place to another. Since I came to America I did not like to move from one place to another, so I thought I would like to have a steady job when I went back to Japan. I did not have time to learn English as I migrated from one place to another. Sometimes I wished I had a steady job so that I could study English. My father was just a farm laborer, and I ended up like him.

Takarabe: When you carried blanket and worked, what kind of a place did you sleep?

A: I don't think Niseis and Sanseis can understand what kind of a place it was. We spread our blankets on the floor in the corner of the barn and slept there. That was before the camps were built. I heard that in the East there are no camps, and the laborers live in the house of the employers because they are permanent workers. In California the laborers are temporary workers, so the employers do not make good facilities. Gradually the treatment of laborers became better, and before the war the camps were improved. After the war the food and facilities of the camps became real good.

Q: Around the time you came here, were there many other people working here beside you and your father?

A: Of course. Among the Asian immigrants Chinese were the first ones. Then Japanese, Philippinos and Mexicans came in that order. These laborers formed groups of 10 or 15 to get a job. In some big ranches they used hundreds of laborers at harvest time.

Q: When did your father return to Japan?

A: About 3 years after I came here.

Q: What did you do after he went home?

A: My father wanted me to go home with him as many Japanese laborers were indulged in gambling, and he did not want me to lead that kind of life. I told him that I would not start gambling. Now that I came here called by father, there is no sense going how in 3 or 4 years, so I wanted to stay here.

Q: Did your father go home with much saving?
A: I came here in 1919 right after the World War I ended and things were good. Father and I worked hard together for three years so we saved considerable amount of money.
Q: May I ask how much money he saved?
A: I don't know because my father took care of the money.
Q: About how much moeny did you make a day?
A: Before the war the wages were cheap, but since I came it was 50¢ an hour, and $5 a day.
Q: Was it a piece work?
A: No, it was a daywork.
Q: Were there piecework?
A: There were piecework, too. They were mostly picking grape and raisins.
Q: Have you ever done piecework?
A: Yes, I have.
Q: Was it a hardwork.
A: Yes, it was hard.I thought I never wanted to do such a hardwork.
Q: Do you make more money doing piecework?
A: Dayworkers in those days made $5 a day, but pieceworkers made $10 to $15 a day.
Q: I heard from some Issei that some people died or became ill By working too hard. Were there such people at your time?
A: No, in those days Isseis were in their prime, so I did not hear of anybody getting sick or die.
Q: What did you do after your father returned to Japan?
A: I looked around for a better job because if I stayed as a migrant laborer I could not succeed or save money. There were many Japanese in Delano in those days, so I went there and got myself a steady job. Then I started a camp. I was 27 years old then.
Q: About how many people were in the camp?
A: The ranch was not too big, about a hundred acres. At grape harvesting time there were about 50 people.
Q: What kind of trouble did you have in managing a camp?
A: There are two kinds of camp. One is to open a camp as his own business. He has to gather people for the camp. Then he goes around looking for work, and gives the job to the laborers. The second kind is to have a landlord build a camp on the ranch. Then he lives on the ranch and manages the camp. In the first kind he is the boss, but in the second kind there is a landlord over you, so he has to do what the landlord tells you to do. My camp was the second kind.
Q: What kind of a headache did you have in your camp?
A: I was in between the landlord and the laborers, so I heard complaints from both sides. If I was good to one side, I was not good to the other side. Another problem was to gather people. In those days Japanese laborers were young, so if they didn't like the camp they left. Where the camp boss was popular the peple gathered.

Q: About how much did you get a day in those days?
A: It was during the depression in 1932 and 1933. I think I was getting 35¢ a day.
Q: Did the landlord pay you?
A: Of course, the landlord paid me by the month. The camp boss had to hire a cook, but if I hired a cook I could not make much money, so my wife cooked.
Q: When did you get married?
A: In 1931.
Q: How did you get married?
A: We got married through the good office of Mr. Orimo who was a school teacher in Delano.
Q: Was she a yobiyose?
A: No, she was a Nisei.
Q: How many children do you have.
A: I have four children.
Q: What did you do during the depression?
A: In those days the wages was 10¢ an hour and $1 a day. My boss was a rich man and he lived in Los Angeles. I took care of everything in the ranch, so he trusted me and gave me $150 a month. That is why I did not feel the depression too much.
Q: Did other Japanese have hard time?
A: Yes. There were not much work, so laborers had hard times. Yet some people still gambled.
Q: Were there people who could not make a living?
A: I didn"t hear of anybody like that. If they lived in camps they had enough to eat.
Q: What do they do if there is no work in the camp?
A: They carry their blankets and move to places where there are work. They ususally know where the work is. In Fresno there were jobs in pruning grape in winter. After that they would go to Los Angeles to work in strawberry farms in spring for 2 to 3 month until the grape season. Then they would return to Fresno and Delano area for grape work.
Q: When they come to your camp did they do just your ranch work?
A: Of course. I did not have time to find other jobs for them. If they want more jobs they go to other camp which gives more jobs.
Q: Did you have work during the depression.
A: Yes, only the wages was low. We were growing table grape which took much work, so we had work. In those days table grape was 9¢ a pound and $40 a ton. Of course the wages was cheap. A year ago it was $700 per ton of raisins.
Q: Did you continue the work till the war broke out?
A: Yes. I continued it for about 15 years.

Q: Do you remember anything that happened before the war broke out?
A: The country gradually recovered from depression by Presiden Roosevelt's NRA or something, and before the war the wages was up to about 35¢ an hour. Then it was enough to eat.
Q: Did you have good relationship with the white people?
A: Yes, because my boss was a white man, an Englishman.
Q: Did any neighbor say bad things to you?
A: No, not even once. They were all good people.
Q: How was the relationship between Japanese and the white people in Delano?
A: There was not much anti-Japanese feeling, but the people in Delano did not like Japanese. The schools were segregated.
Q: Did your children attend segregated schools?
A: No, we were living in Macfarland, a little ways from Delano, so there was no segregation. In Delano Japanese could not seat with the white people in movie theaters. After the war Japanese could not return to Delano. My former landlord wrote to me and said that he wanted me to come back but as poeple in Delano have anti-Japanese feeling I had not better go there.
Q: What kind of thing was hard before the war?
A: There was nothing hard.
Q: Was the atmosphere getting bad before the Pearl Harbor was attacked?
A: A buyer who lived in the same ranch sold me that it would be a big mistake if Japan go into war with America. At that time I didn't believe that kind of thing will happen.
Q: How did you find out about the Pearl Harbor attack?
A: I had a shortwave radio then, and had been listening the news.
Q: Were you surprised to hear the news?
A: Yes, I was. In March of the following year over 40 Japanese in Delano were interned. There was the Heimusha-Kai in Delano, and the members collected money and contributed to the Japanese Army and Navy. The Americans must have known about it.
Q: Were in interned, too.
A: Yes, in March.
Q: What happened first?
A: F.B.I. agents came and searched the house for weapons etc.
Q: What did you do with your shortwave radio?
A: We had to deposit shortwave radios guns etc.
Q: Where did the F.B.I. agents take you to?
A: I stayed in the County jail in Bakersfield for 2 or 3 nights. After I left, my wife had a hard time because she did not know anything about the ranch. I heard that the landlord came to help. From there I was taken to Santa Fe?
Q: How long did you stay in Santa Fe?
A: Four months till first of July.

Q: Did you go to Poston from there?
A: Yes, I could go to Poston because my family was there.
Q: Were there hearings?
A: Yes, many times.
Q: What kind of thing did they ask?
A: They wanted to know our feelings towards Japan. They tried to find out if we would be harmful to America. By the hearing they decided whether they would send us back to the families or not.
Q: You got out quite early, didn't you?
A: Yes, I did. They also asked me if I would be loyal to the Emperor. They asked me if I thought it was all right that Japan started the war. I replied that it was not right that Japan started the war, but Japan was put in a position that she had to fight. They only listened to me.
Q: How was the life in the internment camp?
A: It was good except ~~the fact that~~ we didn't have enough food.
Q: What did you do in the internment camp?
A: They gave us little work, but not much to do.
Q: How did you manage to unite with your family?
A: They must have found out that I did not have dangerous ideas. I was not the only one, many of us were released.
Q: Were you very happy when you went to Poston?
A: Yes, not like in internment camp, we were free in Poston.
Q: What kind of work did you do in Poston?
A: We clearned the land and grew vegetables. Everybody worked according to their skills, carpenters, farmers, doctors etc.
Q: What did you do?
A: I worked as a farmer. Later I worked as a cook.
Q: Was the cook's job hard?
A: No, not too hard. There was one mess hall for each block of about 200 people.
Q: What do you remember about the camp?
A: I regret that I didn't learn anything while I was in the camp.
Q: What was your hobby?
A: Wood curving. It was very popular.
Q: What kind of entertainment were there?
A: Play, go, shogi etc.
Q: When did you leave the camp?
A: In July, 1945. I was not too anxious to leave the camp as I did not have any place to go to. But the mayor of the camp told us that the camp was going to be closed soon, so we had better leave the camp as soon as possible. Therefore I decided to go back to California.
Q: Where did you go to?
A: I could not return to Delano, so I came to Fresno to find a place to live. In those days ranch owners wanted laborers so they built camps and were hiring people. I went to find

a place to live and not a job, but I could not find a house. Then I heard that there was a rancher who wanted Japanese families, so I went there and saw the rancher. He told me that I could have a house when it was finished. I stayed there and worked while the house was being built. When the house was finished I moved in. This boss like Japanese, and hired many Japanese, but there was no camp boss, so I was hired as a boss.

Q: About how many Japanese were there?
A: There were only about 30 Japanese at that time, but later there were 150 Japanese at one time in 2 camps.
Q: You had experience, but you could also speak English, couldn't you?
A: I could only speak broken English, but I continued until I retired.
Q: When did your wife join you?
A: The called the family after the house was finished in September.
Q: Was the relocation camp open till then?
A: Yes. There were many single men in the relocation camp so I hired them and increased the number of workers.
Q: Were there still many single men?
A: Yes, there were. Around 1945 they were still in 40s so we could manage a camp business using them.
Q: Did those single people stay single?
A: Yes, because they could not find mates.
Q: Were there many single men around here?
A: There were around 150 single men in my camp.
Q: Did men with families live in houses?
A: Yes, they did. The single men lived in camps.
Q: Were there more single men than married men?
A: Yes, there were 2 camps for single men, and I took care of them. Camp No. 3 & 4 were family camps. There were 25 families in Camp No.3, and 25 families in Camp No.4. They were all Japanese.
Q: Even after the war?
A: Yes. There were some white men who came to work in the ranch after they came home from the war. The boss told them that most of the workers in the ranch are Japanese, so if they don't like them they cam leave, because he didn't want any trouble. Some white men stayed but many left.
Q: Were there any single men who died in your camp?
A: Yes, there were. For a few years after the camp was opened in 1945 there were hardly any sickness or death, but as the years went by more people became sick and more people died. Many Japanese returned to Japan, but no new people came. As Japanese workers decreased I retired in 1961.
Q: What did you do with single Japanese who died?
A: If they had any relations in Japan we notified them, but if they didn't. we buried them in a cemetery in Fresno. If they had any property the county collected it. If they became ill the county hospital took care of them.

Q: Were there people who gambled after the war?
A: Yes, among themselves or going to Chinese gambling houses.
Q: Were there still such places?
A: Yes. In Fresno.
Q: Were there any single people who sent money to Japan?
A: For about 5 to 10 years after they came here they sent letters to Japan. But after many years, their parents die, and as they do not have wives or children they do not write to anyone.
Q: Were there any people who had wives in Japan?
A: Yes, there were. There were some who had children in Japan. Some of these people finally returned to Japan.
Q: Wasn't it sad to stay single over here?
A: I don't think they felt that way.
Q: Were there any Japanese restaurants and brothels around here?
A: There were taverns, but the brothels were not in public. They are anywhere you go.
T. Especially where ther are many single men.
Takahashi: I hear that there are many in San Francisco.
Takarabe: There are many in Sacramento, too.
Q: Were those prostitutes Japanese?
A: No, there were no Japanese prostitutes, They were all white.
Q: Were there any Japanese restaurants?
A: In small places there were eating houses and taverns.
Q: How did you feel when you saw single Issei men?
A: I felt sorry for them, but they don't seem to feel sorry for themselves.
Q: How many percent of Issei men do you think ended as single?
A: I think about 70% of them did.
Q: Do the family members who live in the camp stay there all the time, or they move around?
A: If they have a good job and a place to live they stay there for a long time.
Q: Did Issei families have many children?
A: Not too many. About 4 or 5.
Q: Then, were there many children in a camp?
A: I did not notice it too much.
Q: Did you have worries concerning the education of your children?
A: I did not have much worries as I had a steady job.
Q: What are your children doing now?
A:

Takarabe: The tape recorder was not working at first and I missed the first part, so I would like to repeat the first part.
Q: Your name is?
A: Takahashi, Kotaro.
Q: When were you born?
A: In 1899.
Q: When did your father go to Hawaii?
A: I don't remember. I was only about 6 years old.
Q: Didn't your father want you to come to America?
A: No. As he saw young men indulge in gambling, he did not want me to come to America and become like one of them.
Takarabe: Please tell me again about the composition you wrote in grammar school in Japan which was praised by your teacher.
Takahashi: When I was in the 6th grade my teacher told us to write a composition on the family. I wrote that if we stayed in our native land all our lives, the youth would not be able to express our lively spirit. They should leave their native land and advance overseas. My desire was to go to America as my father was there. The teacher praised my composition, and told me that I should fulfill my desire.
Q: Were there many people who came to America from your town?
A: There were a few. The life was easier in the northeastern provinces of Japan where I came from. Therefore not many people came overseas. But in Hiroshima, Okayama, Kumamoto and other prefectures where the land was smaller compared to the population many people came overseas.
Q: What kind of a country did you think America was in those days?
A: Many young men were attracted by America?
Q: In what way were they attracted?
A: They had ideas that America was a country of money and culture. In those days silk industry was very popular in our native town, and I heard from my parents that America was the best customer of silk. That is why I thought America was a rich country.
Q: What was your first impression of America when you arrived here?
A: The real America was different from what I thought it would be like before I came here. When I came here I was 19 years old, so I had to work. But the work was so hard that I thought I should not have come here if I had to work so hard.
Q: Did your father gamble or drink?
A: He did not gamble. He liked to drink, but he did not drink much.
Q: How about you?
A: I liked to drink like my father, and I drank a little more than he did.
Q: What was the religion of your family?
A: Buddhism. I believed in it, but I was not too arden.

Q: Are there anything you want to tell young poeple?
A: Nothing special.
Q: Young people are interested in learning about Japanese culture. Do you think that is good?
A: I think they should learn about Japanese culture.
Q: Will it be all right with you to let Sanseis and college professors listen to your story if they want to?
A: That is all right, but I don't want it made public in books or something like that. If you are going to do so, I would like to hear it.
Takarabe: You have a right to what you said in the tape, so it is up to you to keep it or give it to us. If you give it to us we will show you the manuscript before we publish it. Would it be all right with you if we have this tape?
Takahashi: That is all right with me. I just don't want it to be published in Nichi-Bei Shimbun or something like that.
Takarabe: It will be in English, to be read by Sanseis, but we will show it to you before we publish it, as it is our policy. Thank you very much.